

You're the flood that opened my heart by TheMikeWheelers (jasongracefully)

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Summary:

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You're the flood that opened my heart

Mike Wheeler wasn't ready to fall in love, he never even saw it coming, but then Eleven showed up and his heart had burst and now he was drowning in the flood.

He had crushes before, of course, but never like this. There were girls at school who were certainly pretty enough to make him stutter, and though he would never admit it, he did have a *teeny* crush on Princess Leia, but even his biggest Star Wars fantasies were nothing compared to what he felt now.

Growing up, Mike saw his parents, and as kids always do, he figured he'd grow up to be just like them. He'd meet a nice girl, marry her, start a family, and buy a house at the end of a cul-de-sac. When he thought about his future, this was what he saw. He never thought about falling in love. Sure, he figured it would happen when he met that perfect girl, but he never *expected* it. He never thought about what it would be like, who this girl would be, how it would happen, or when in his life he'd fall in love. These weren't details Mike ever thought to consider, they were all so unpredictable, why should he? It would happen sometime in the future, that was his mindset, and he didn't think any more of it.

Falling in love was never a present goal for Mike, it was always that far-off dream of what the future had in store. It never really occurred to him that it could just *happen* at any time.

Then he met El, and Mike didn't realize he was free-falling until he had crashed into the bottom-- crashed *hard*.

Movies had always told him that when someone meets the love of their life, they can *feel* themselves falling for them. There's that rush and that giddiness you feel as they come into your life and you can slowly feel as everything shifts towards them. That wasn't the case for Mike. He never stopped to think about how he felt about El until it hit him, he wasn't falling in love with her, he had already reached that smash upon impact. He was already hopelessly, deeply, devastatingly in love with her.

One second she was that strange girl he had taken in, and then Mike blinked and closed his eyes for a second and she was suddenly his entire world. There was no period of falling in love, at least, not that he realized. It had all happened so fast, and he was so busy that week he met her, that he didn't even realize he had any feelings for her until it became clear that he was having so many feelings he wasn't sure how to handle it.

Was love supposed to be like that? Those cheesy movies, they always described that giddiness and brain-rotting sweetness that just made Mike roll his eyes. Things with El weren't like that. She was just a girl who had come into his life and gave him all the adventure he could ever wish for, and somewhere along the way, at a moment Mike couldn't quite place his finger on, she had stolen his heart.

Nancy always made Mike watch those cliché romantic comedies, or even the old classic movies his parents watched at his age about two people who just so happened to meet and fall in love and that was it. Their lives were empty, they didn't have anything to do other than stare into each other's eyes and revel in that feeling of falling.

That wasn't Mike and El's love story. They never had that privilege. Mike fell in love with her while fighting monsters, while trying to save his best friend's life. Everything happened so quickly he didn't have the time to bask in those cheesy emotions, he didn't even realize he was having them.

Mike fell for her hard and fast and he didn't ever realize he was falling until he'd reached the bottom.

Falling.

That was it, the moment he was able to place as the exact second he knew he was in love with El. He was milliseconds from death, when suddenly the entire world stopped around him, literally. He had jumped off the cliff, assuming he would die with the rocks at the bottom, when the air stopped rushing around him and he realized he was suspended in place.

She had saved him.

She was there, walking towards him with a fire in her eyes that ignited another fire in Mike's heart.

He came to a conclusion, she had saved *all but one part* of him from that jump off the cliff. His heart kept on falling, falling, falling until it reached the bottom. It hit the rocks and exploded, thousands of little shards littered around the quarry but Mike didn't care. She hadn't broken his heart, no, she had *exploded* it. All it took was seeing her and Mike's chest *ached* with how much he felt *everything*.

She had saved him from one fall, but not another. When Mike was back on solid ground watching her come over to him, he realized that this girl who he barely even knew had come and suddenly he wasn't falling anymore, he had crashed. Maybe he hadn't crashed into the rocks at the bottom of the quarry, but there was a *much stronger* crash happening inside him.

Until that moment, he hadn't even known he was falling, but now he wasn't falling anymore. He had reached the bottom.

He was in love with her, and suddenly everything changed. He thought back to the vision of that picture-perfect family at the end of the cul-de-sac that he always imagined for his future. That girl whose waist he was wrapping an arm around, her face was always blurred out, so Mike couldn't picture what she looked like. But now that was gone, the cloud had passed. He could see her eyes and her nose and her short hair, he could see every detail about her. Now, when Mike thought about the future, when he thought about *having somebody to love*, she had a face.

And that terrified Mike.

He wasn't ready, he wasn't expecting it. He was only 12 years old. Sure, he had his schoolyard crushes before, and he thought about dating and relationships, but not like *this*. There was always that far-off fantasy of loving somebody, but actually finding that person? He never saw it coming. His mind had always just filed it away as a fantasy for the future, never expecting it to happen in any foreseeable time. But it had happened, and Mike's mind was spinning faster than he could comprehend.

Love was always just a dream of the future for Mike. That was, until it was slapping him in the face right in front of him, screaming, *"Hello! I'm here now! I know you didn't expect me, but I'm here and I won't be leaving!"*

Meeting El was clarity, but also fear. It was like everything he'd ever heard about love and every fantasy about it finally made sense, but that was utterly terrifying. It wasn't supposed to make sense, not now at least.

Love is a hard feeling when it's happening for the first time, having to swallow all those new emotions that you've never felt before, it can be scary, *especially* when you don't see it coming, when you've never expected it but now it's knocking on your door.

That isn't to say Mike *didn't want* to love El, in fact it was the opposite. It was absolutely terrifying, and all these new feelings were overwhelming, but they were still *good*. He loved her, and he loved loving her. No matter how scary it was, *she made it worth it*. Loving her gave him the bravery it took to love her. It made no sense, but love never makes sense, and all Mike knew was how much his heart began to swell upon thinking about her.

First loves are uncharted water, but if loving El meant diving into that mysterious abyss, Mike figured he didn't even have a choice, because he had already fallen, he was already in love with her. There was no stopping it, and he didn't want to stop it.

It wasn't the same for El, and a part of Mike was jealous of her for it. He was her first love just as she was his, but it was different. Eleven didn't even know what love was until she met Mike, she didn't know feelings like that were something that even existed, and she surely didn't have any expectations about what love would be like for her. She just learned what love was, and realized she was already in love with someone. It was simple, she didn't have to wrap her mind around it or prepare herself. It wasn't scary, it just made sense.

Nothing made sense for Mike. He couldn't begin to understand how in a matter of just a few days, a girl came into his life and now she was plucking on his heartstrings like a guitar, and he didn't even see it coming until it was too late.

But she kept playing with the guitar in his heart, and as scary as it was, letting himself be so vulnerable and have these new feelings and wash away old expectations, Mike really loved the music.